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TORTURE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN ENEMY: THE EXAMPLE OF ARGENTINA 1976-1983¹

Lindsay DuBois

In an article on Guyana's Jonestown massacre, Lee Drummond contemplates the lack of ethnographic interest in this infamous, bizarre and horrific event.² The "professional instinct" of Drummond's colleagues, he believes, told them that it was an unsuitable subject for anthropological study. The main reason they cited was the event's sensationalism, but Drummond argues that a more essential factor was its ugliness and

the basic reluctance to confront malignancy—a reluctance we actually enshrine in our theories of society by representing them as long-term, adaptive, integrative affairs . . . Disorderly change, the eruptions of the bizarre and ugly into our placid lives, is rarely discussed in our monographs.³

Recent Argentine history confronts us with another such malignancy. One need only scan the pages of a document like *Nunca Más*, by the Argentine National Commission on the Disappeared,⁴ to be struck dumb by the grisly inventiveness of people in thinking up new and more horrible ways to torture and murder one another. These kinds of abuses have been well and carefully documented all over the world, though perhaps nowhere so diligently as in Argentina. Despite innovations, the sort of events which occurred in Argentina during the military dictatorship's so called "dirty war" (1976-1983) against "subversion" are neither unique nor particularly extraordinary. Many prefer to believe that state terrorism is only possible under one of

the traditional villains, but Amnesty International, for example, presents case after case, in country after country, of the most flagrant human rights violations, estimating that 98 of the world's governments torture.⁵ Surely this proliferation of violence is not perpetrated by a few Hitlers and Stalins. It is inflicted on and by a great many real people. In some sense, this simple fact is the truly startling and perplexing one.

Looking at the recent and well documented case of Argentina, I will explore the ideology of a specific set of victimizers: to pose some questions about their goals, objectives, and rationalizations—recognizing that the three may be quite different. I try especially to take to heart Michel Foucault's demand that we abandon the "violence-ideology opposition."⁶ Thinking about the relation between violence and ideology seems particularly useful in understanding the connection of the practice of Argentine state terrorism and the ideas that helped generate it. Throughout, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that this shocking physical violence is but one aspect of the juntas' "Process of National Reorganization" that has other, less dramatic expressions in repressive social, political, and economic policies.⁷ I do not look at these processes here; my intention is more modest: I hope to illuminate one aspect of El Proceso, arguing that the incredible violence of the late 1970s can be partially understood in terms of the *creation* of an 'enemy' in fulfillment of the military's ideology. I see torture as the realization of an ideology on the bodies of its victims.⁸

Argentina has a long history of political violence, but the events of the seventies and early eighties were particularly bloody.⁹ In 1974 Juan Peron died, leaving the presidency to his wife, Isabel. Generally considered to have been unable to control the troubled economy, and personally involved in escalating the political violence, "Isabelita" was unseated in a bloodless coup under General Jorge Videla in 1976. The period between 1973 and 1976 is often described as anarchic, with multiple sources of politically motivated violence.¹⁰ This chaotic interval primed the Argentine population for Videla's coup and the ensuing "war against subversion" which was an integral part of "El Proceso de Reorganización Nacional" (the Process of National Reorganization, known as "El Proceso").¹¹ But already, toward the end of Isabelita's reign, there were indications that part of the government was behind a series of death squad murders. And as Robert Cox, former editor of the *Buenos Aires Herald* noted:

What was overlooked was that on the day of the coup, the infamous Ford Falcon cars, which had already been associated with the murder squads, formed a sinister phalanx for the tanks and armored cars that rolled impressively but unnecessarily into Buenos Aires.¹²

In the ensuing years the military was responsible for anywhere from ten to thirty thousand "disappearances" and probably another eighty to one hundred thousand detentions.¹³ People were "disappeared"—kidnapped and sequestered by military squads who universally denied any knowledge of the victims' whereabouts, or, in fact, of whether they were alive or dead. Everyone held in secret detention centers (as were virtually all the "disappeared," and many of those detained) was subjected to systematic torture and

interrogation. The thousands who never returned are now understood to have been murdered by the military: to have died during torture, been shot, been dropped (either dead or alive) from planes or helicopters into the sea, or otherwise "transferred," as the official documents recorded.¹⁴ It is important to note that the disappearances were no secret.¹⁵ Although few suspected the extent of the horror, the climate of fear that prevailed throughout this period is sufficient indication that people knew of sinister activities. At the same time, there seems to have been a widespread belief that the victims "must have been guilty of something."

The terror subsided in 1982 with the victory of Britain over Argentina in the Malvinas/Falklands war. It was this military defeat, combined with a worsening economy and soaring inflation, rather than any sort of public reaction to the horrors of state terrorism, which was eventually responsible for the demise of the military and the return to civilian rule in 1983. Once the other shortcomings of the military were publicly acknowledged, however, the human rights issue was allowed to surface. In fact, Raúl Alfonsín succeeded in bringing his Radical Party to power on the human rights issue, in explicit opposition to the general amnesty the government had granted itself before ceding power. Alfonsín had been one of the only politicians to speak out against the abuses during El Proceso, and in the end it was he who won the election with widespread popular support.

One of Alfonsín's first acts in office was to bring charges against the nine commanders who had formed the three juntas that ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1983. Although the charges went first to a military court, the commanders were acquitted; Alfonsín then brought them to trial before a civilian court. The public trial began April 25th, 1985; over nine

hundred witnesses testified on 709 cases chosen by the public prosecutor, and for five months Argentines watched as the details of the 'secret war' unfolded before them, receiving extended daily press coverage (and, bizarrely, silent television coverage). Two commanders received life sentences, three received sentences varying from four and a half to fourteen years, and four were acquitted. Meanwhile, hundreds of other military men were tried and convicted of human rights abuses.

More recently, three military uprisings demanding concessions from civil authorities successfully used widespread fear of a coup to limit the judicial process and to protect members of the military; the "punto final" (final stop—stipulating a deadline for the introduction of new cases) and "obediencia debida" (due obedience) legislation are the tangible results. The rebels did not simply demand a limit to prosecution; rather they sought, and continue to seek, "revindication"—they are trying to rewrite the history of the "dirty war."

The profound economic crisis of the last years and the consequent defeat of Alfonsín have further shifted public attention from issues of human rights. President Carlos Menem, a Peronist, seeks "reconciliation" between the military and civil society and is using widespread pardons ("indultos") to enlist the support of the armed forces.¹⁶ As I write, a second indulto covering the remaining ex-commanders and the Montenero leader is anticipated, to mark a break from the past ("el punto de inflexión"). The current Vice-President Duhalde says: "We must think about the human rights of the living, not of the dead."¹⁷

The prosecution of military officers for murder, torture, kidnapping, and other crimes committed during El Proceso is over, and many of those who were convicted have recently gone free.

This fact meets with outrage from human rights groups and the families of victims, but others seem satisfied to close the book on a troubling episode in recent national history.

Democracy brought much discussion of Argentinian state terrorism. Most of this centered on bringing the actual events to light, hence the very high sales of *Nunca Más*, which documents the type and extent of the state repression in gory and convincing detail;¹⁸ the daily coverage of testimony at the commanders' trial; special weekly newspapers devoted to the trial (*El Diario del Juicio*); and so on. The questions that do not seem to have been asked as often are the more difficult ones: questions about how state terrorism was possible, about why so many people did not act although everyone knew, about the complicity of many Argentines. It is not hard to understand why these questions have gone unasked—they seem to implicate almost all Argentine society. But these incidents are not so very unusual; they do not stand alone in time and space, as an individual skeleton (or even thirty thousand skeletons) in Argentina's closet; thus itemizing the horrors is not sufficient. The same kind of events have happened elsewhere before, happen today, and will continue to happen. Therefore these more difficult questions remain the important ones.

Upon reading documents like *Nunca Más* it becomes painfully clear that the abductions, torture, and murders were not merely information gathering "tools." A policeman who worked at one of the hundreds of secret detention centers was asked by a judge at the commanders' trial whether torture was practiced at his center. He responded:

What happened was a total aberration, it makes you sick just to think of the tortures I saw. Everyone who came in was tortured,

not just for days but for months, every form of torture: they hit them, they burnt them, they raped them, especially the women but also the men, they beat them with chains.¹⁹

Given this sort of unremitting use of torture—typical of all the detention centers—and also given the fact that tens of thousands of people with absolutely no connection to violent resistance were abducted and interred in these detention centers (many never to return home), one cannot help but believe that other issues were at stake. The expressed goals of El Proceso are insufficient to explain its practice. Neither will a notion of sadism suffice. For here we would be talking not about a few sadists, but rather about the creation of corps of sadists, and an extensive apparatus designed to exercise this sadism on tens of thousands of people. This is clearly a social, not a merely a psychological, aberration.

A few sources deal with the ideology of those who were involved in the “anti-subversive” campaign. One of the domains in which the ideology of the military is most explicitly expressed is the trials themselves. Mark Osiel’s article on the impact of ideas and interests on the legal strategies of the groups involved in the trial of the ex-commanders is useful to this end.²⁰ He argues that the courtroom drama was less about the guilt or innocence of the accused than about the writing of history. The ex-commanders refused to compromise in any way because they felt the definition of their past was on trial.

What was felt to be at stake at the trial was not so much the fate of the defendants, but the fate of deeply-felt notions of historical truth and falsehood, good and evil. The most narrow judicial disputes . . . evoked and symbolized a more general dispute over the kind of society Argentina was, or should become.²¹

A specific interpretation of history was both an expression of, and a justification for, the ideological stance that lay behind El Proceso. The trial was part of a struggle to define truth. Each of the positions (the government’s, the military’s, and the human rights groups’) on the the violence of the state and on the trial is tied to a specific historical understanding and interpretation of the events of El Proceso.

The most striking aspect of the defense argument was that it refused to acknowledge that any unjustifiable crimes had occurred.²² The argument was quite odd because it contained three contradictory positions representing various levels of argument and fall-back positions. First, the defense denied that any disappearances had taken place. Second, it asserted that, had any disappearances occurred, the junta had not ordered them. And third, the defense argued that any crimes which had been committed were, in fact, just the exercise of the armed forces’ legal duty. Here they cited Isabel Peron’s legal command to the military to “annihilate” terrorism, and the anti-subversion campaign was portrayed as fulfilling that command.²³

The defense asserted that the war against terrorism was a just war, necessary in order to save the country from chaos. Similarly, the armed forces argued that it had been “fighting” in self-defense. The statement of Admiral Massera—head of the Navy from 1976 to 1979, one of the two defendants who received life sentences for multiple counts of murder, torture, rape, kidnapping, and theft—is truly remarkable for the degree to which he sees himself engaged in a just, although thoroughly ideological, war. He begins:

I have not come to defend myself. No one has to defend himself for winning a just war. And the war against terrorism was a just war. Nevertheless, I am here being

prosecuted because we won that just war. If we had lost we would not be here . . .

But here we are. Because we won the war of arms but lost the psychological war . . . [Our fixation on the war of arms] kept us from seeing clearly the exceptional propagandistic resources of the enemy and, while we fought, an effective system of persuasion began to cast sinister shadows on our reality, transforming it until it converted assailants into those assaulted, victimizers into victims, executioners into innocents. . .

When the enemy realized that it had begun to lose the war of arms, it mounted a spectacular defense movement, unobjectionable, on the sacred theme of human rights. I have very good reason to know that this was a psychological war, devoid of good intentions . . .²⁴

Thus it is clear that Massera sees the enemy he "confronted in battle" (in the shadows of the clandestine detention center) as the same enemy he faces in court, and the same enemy that accuses him of grave human rights abuses.

As Massera's statement shows, the military conceived of the "dirty war" as a legitimate civil war in defense of a certain set of values. For example, the defense insisted that the ex-commanders should be judged under the rules of war, rather than under civilian laws.²⁵ This view of recent history was also reflected in the military's definitions of the extent and strength of the enemy, which differed markedly from those of the government, human rights organizations, and others. While the human rights groups insisted that the guerillas had numbered no more than two hundred, the military leadership maintained that the figure was thirty thousand.²⁶ Osiel summarizes the ideological perspective of the military, saying:

From these legal arguments the officers proceeded beyond the walls of the courtroom,

to more overtly political ones. Christian civilization had had to be preserved against those who, under the banner of tolerance, had tolerated only the questioning of authority, sacred and secular. The permissive culture of the universities, in which all ideas were treated seriously no matter how lunatic, had been the natural breeding ground of terrorists, middle class intellectuals all. The terrorists had simply carried the cultural subversiveness of the liberal universities to its logical conclusion. It would have been useless to kill only the insects that had already hatched, while still more germinated freely in the nest. The military had therefore been justified in killing those who, though not yet guerrillas, had displayed the sympathies for social change that would sooner or later inexorably lead them to become ones. This was a view stemming from national security doctrine, to which many officers still privately subscribed, but which they learned to express publicly only with much greater reticence after the democratic transition.²⁷

It is important to note that these arguments were expressed after the fact. One may want to ask, then, whether they represent retrospective justification for what would be considered excesses by any definition, or were, in fact, a cause of these excesses.

Although the military was generally careful about destroying documentation before they returned the government to civilian hands, a few historical documents indicate, if somewhat obliquely, that the repression was seen in these terms. One example is the "Directive 504 of the general command of the army," signed by General Videla in 1977. Here, although Videla says that two years into "the Process of National Reorganization" the "National Strategy of Countersubversion" has successfully eliminated 90 percent of the "opponent," he lays out plans for continuing the campaign in a way that seems to

explicitly expand the object of attack to those with subversive ideas. Videla calls for a renewed effort:

to increase military action in support of the normalization of industrial, educational, religious and territorial areas, as a way of preventing and neutralizing any intention to infiltrate, capture or mobilize the masses in such a way as might interfere in the forward march of the Process of National Reorganization.²⁸

The height of the repression was to continue through 1979.

The discourse of the military and their representatives is replete with references to war and "the enemy." Because the enemy was also Argentine, the military found itself having to construct a notion of the enemy as "the subversive." Initially, one supposes, the military conceived of the subversive as the leftist guerilla, but as the process progressed the notion was expanded to refer to people with ideas that challenged their own. Most obviously these were "leftists" and critics of the military, but Jacobo Timerman argues that it extended to an explicit and systematic anti-Semitism.²⁹

It is a little difficult to determine the extent to which "the defense of Christian values," a prominent theme, implied anti-Semitism. Almost all the literature seems to downplay this aspect, although passing references to it occur almost everywhere. Osiel suggests that anti-Semitism was de-emphasized by the government and in the trial precisely because it is so widespread in Argentine society.³⁰ There is evidence to support the argument that at least some of the torturers emulated Nazis. Survivors report seeing swastikas in torture rooms, hearing jailers and torturers espousing Nazi and anti-Semitic rhetoric, and have testified that Jewish prisoners were picked out for particularly brutal abuse and torture.³¹

Nunca Más portrays anti-Semitism thus:

Anti-Semitism was presented as a component of a deformed version of what "being Christian" or "religious" signified. This was nothing more than a cover for political and ideological persecution. The defense of God and Christian values was a simple ideological motivation which could be understood by the agents of repression, even at their lowest organizational and cultural levels.³²

Anti-Semitism functions as forms of prejudice usually do: to divide the world into simple dichotomies of "us" and "them." There are a number of questions to ask about the conditions which encourage or necessitate the creation of an "other" of this sort. One might speculate on the role of specific kinds of political and economic situations leading to the creation of necessary victims, but further research would be required to investigate this avenue.

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt deals with the illogic of prejudicial ideologies. She argues that oppressive states frequently fabricate propaganda and cling "to their original lies in the face of absurdity."³³ The totalitarian state (and others, to a lesser degree) manages to transform its beliefs into realities by acting as if they are real. That is, practices can help to create meaning and shape ideology. This is not to say that there was ever a Jewish world conspiracy, for example, but rather that the concept was no longer an objective issue. It became "the chief element of the Nazi reality; the point was that the Nazis acted as though the world were dominated by Jews and needed a counter-conspiracy to defend itself."³⁴ Arendt goes on to write:

Racism for them was no longer a debatable theory of dubious scientific value, but was

being realized every day in the functioning hierarchy of a political organization in whose framework it would have been very “unrealistic” to question it.³⁵

This is an important point. The power to enforce a definition of reality is a key characteristic of domination. In the torture chamber this domination is almost complete; the last line of resistance is a refusal to let the torturer/jailor determine the prisoner's reality. One of the most commonly described characteristics of this kind of internment is the feeling that the warden and the prison constitute the prisoner's universe, becoming his or her entire reality. In her book on her imprisonment in “Escualita” (the little school) concentration camp in Bahía Blanca, Alicia Portnoy describes the minutiae that were the moments of relative liberty essential to survival—like the possession of an empty matchbox, the gift of a piece of bread, or a few words exchanged with a fellow prisoner.³⁶ Although this seems almost ridiculous in the face of the kind of physical and psychological torture that all prisoners experienced, these tiny expressions of identity and humanity were the weapons people used to defend themselves against the pressure of being remade by their captors. Daniel Eduardo Fernández, an ex-prisoner who was eighteen and a secondary school student when abducted, testifies:

The idea was to leave the victim without any kind of psychological resistance, until he was at the mercy of the interrogator, and thus obtain any answer the latter wanted, however absurd. If they wanted you to reply that you had seen San Martín on horseback the previous day, they succeeded. And then they would tell us we were liars, until you really felt it was true, and then they carried on with the torture . . .³⁷

Dr. Noberto Liwsky, another former “disappeared,” describes the many horrifying tortures exercised on him and then continues:

The most vivid and terrifying memory I have of all that time was of always living with death. I felt it was impossible to think. I desperately tried to summon up a thought in order to convince myself I wasn't dead. That I wasn't mad. At the same time I wished with all my heart that they would kill me as soon as possible.

There was a constant struggle in my mind. On the one hand: “I must remain lucid and get my ideas straight again”; on the other: “Let them finish me off once and for all.”³⁸

The actual experiences of ex-prisoners like Portnoy, Fernández, and Liwsky seem to point to an important connection between the constraints on ideas and thought that are part of political imprisonment and the physical constraints of being jailed and tortured. If the trial was a moment in a struggle over the definition and enforcement of a particular “truth,” it is only one such moment (although an especially well defined and recorded one) in the ongoing struggle to create and define Argentine social, political, and historical reality. This battle was also fought in the clandestine detention centers. Here we begin to approach Michel Foucault's idea of the dialectic relation between violence and ideology.

Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* addresses the problem of the meaning of violence in terms of a “political economy of the body.”³⁹ Penal torture, he argues, “is a differentiated production of pain, an organized ritual of the marking of victims and the expression of the power that punishes In the “excesses” of torture, a whole economy of power is invested.”⁴⁰ This explanation makes sense in terms of the Argentine material. It begins to explain the “excesses” in

terms of a strategy where, as Foucault says, "power is exercised rather than possessed."⁴¹

Foucault goes on to describe the association between pain and truth in judicial torture:

In the practice of torture, pain, confrontation and truth were bound together, they worked together on the patient's [victim's] body. The search for truth through judicial torture was certainly a way of obtaining evidence, the most serious of all, the confession of the guilty person; but it was also the battle, and this victory of one adversary over the other, that "produced" truth according to a ritual.⁴²

Talal Asad's "Notes on Body Pain and Truth in Medieval Christian Ritual" extends Foucault's notion.⁴³ Asad is concerned with "the genealogy of disciplining-the-body-for-getting-at-the-truth"⁴⁴ as part of a larger interest in the relation between power and Christianity. He contrasts two forms of torture: the ordeal and judicial torture. In the ordeal, the victim was tortured until he confessed, and if he did not confess he was declared innocent. The ordeal was akin to the judicial duel, where the victor is proven right by virtue of his victory. In the ordeal, the truth was inscribed on the body of the victim. Judicial, inquisitorial torture, on the other hand, was quite different. Its goal was to produce information; it was a "strategy of enquiry."⁴⁵ The role of inquisitorial torture was to elicit a confession which had to be repeated independently at a time when the victim was not undergoing torture. "Violence done to the body was held to be a condition facilitating the emergence and capture of truth."⁴⁶ Asad notes:

The church knew full well that confession was not an isolated act, that in its creative, as in its incriminating aspects, it was a special modality of dialogue informed by

power, a unique process which linked together the idea of bodily pain (here or in the here after), with the exchange of question and answer in the pursuit of truth.⁴⁷

In both cases, "the body was . . . an arena for the truth."⁴⁸

The Argentine case seems to lie somewhere between these two relations of body pain and truth. On one hand, torture was conducted together with interrogation, with the explicit goal of obtaining information. Indeed, other abductions were often carried out on the basis of names revealed under torture.⁴⁹ But victims were universally tortured on arrival "to soften them up" (until the procedures were changed to prevent the death of prisoners before they had even been interrogated). The Argentine case also differs from the inquisitorial model in the manner mentioned above: the length and extent of torture surpasses any merely "pragmatic" purpose.⁵⁰

Bringing together these ideas of Arendt, Foucault, and Asad, we may begin to approach the "meaning" of torture in the context of the terrorism of the state in Argentina. It is, as Steven Gregory and Daniel Timerman suggest, a ritual-like expression of the modern totalitarian state.⁵¹ It is the ultimate in domination, a domination not only of the body, but also of ideas. Through the practices of torture, the torturers use their victims to confirm and act out their world-view. By treating thousands of people as communist terrorists and zionists, they create them as terrorists, in Arendt's sense.⁵² To quote Jacobo Timerman:

Any totalitarian interrogator . . . has a definite conception of the world he inhabits and of reality. And any fact that fails to conform to this conception is suitably distorted in order to fit into the scheme. Distorted or explained, judged or

restructured There's a ring of absurdity to it when you read about it, but a much more terrible aspect when you hear about it in the context of an interrogation unraveling under the auspices of expert torturers.⁵³

This argument helps to make sense of Massera's testimony at the trials, for example. The military were never made to confront the fact that they were abducting, torturing, and murdering thousands of "innocent" people as terrorists.⁵⁴ People without ties to terrorism or "subversion" were "remade" into terrorists or subversives. This process worked, and to a remarkable extent continues to work, in society at large as well. People who were abducted "must have been involved in something," it was said (and is still said); or "the military knows what it's doing." Reactions like this can also be read as defensive, easing the minds of many in a climate of fear and apparent powerlessness, but they still buttress the ideological interpretation of the torturers.

It would be a mistake to argue that this ideological creation of an enemy which had to be brutally exterminated or controlled constituted the entire "meaning" of the direct physical violence of El Proceso. Certainly there are many other elements that are crucial to understanding this aspect of El Proceso in full. Some of the aspects one would want to examine include the longer history of political violence in Argentina, the history of some key political symbols, a great many economic issues, the social/psychological issue of terror, and social questions like the class and ethnic memberships of the various people involved.⁵⁵

However, the aspects of the "meaning" of the terrorism of the state as

it is constituted in practices of torture are especially relevant because they are symptomatic of the type of government which tries to (and succeeds in) boldly and unhesitatingly abuse its citizens, tormenting tens of thousands in the name of the greater good. It is about the exercise of power of and for itself. As such, it often lost contact with the "rational" aims and goals of the military state. In his testimony in the trial of the ex-commanders, Emilio Mignone recounts a conversation he had with Colonel Roberto Roualdes, whom he encountered in the search for his "disappeared" daughter, Monica. Here he is quoting Roualdes:

" . . . you have to know that I can do what I want with you because here I am 'the master of life and death.'" Yes, he said this to me, and then he stopped, and like a crazy, he pointed to the floor and shouted: "Below here, in these 'dungeons,' I have 33 children of military men, and they are going to rot here."⁵⁶

With the pardon of virtually all the participants in the terrorism of the state, the present Argentine government hopes to put the past behind it. People speak of moving on and looking ahead, but the knowledge that the state can and has brutally exercised power in this way is not easy to forget; nor has the ideological part of this "battle" been effectively settled or laid to rest. Thus recent discussions on the re-introduction of the death penalty in Argentina have engaged concepts of discipline, punishment, and vengeance in the context of a recent history that is profoundly experienced, but little understood. The role which the memory of this past will play in Argentina's future remains unclear.

Notes

1. This work was revised while I was in Buenos Aires with the generous support of Sigma-Xi, The Scientific Research Foundation Grant-in-aid of Research, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Doctoral Fellowship, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation Pre-doctoral Grant. Also, thanks to Anne Meneley and Nancy Powers for comments on earlier drafts of this paper.
2. Lee Drummond, "Jonestown: A Study in Ethnographic Discourse." *Semiotica*. 46 (1983), pp. 167-209.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
4. Argentine National Commission on the Disappeared (CONADEP), *Nunca Más*. Trans. Writers and Scholars International. (New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux in association with Index on Censorship, 1986 [1984 in Spanish]).
5. Amnesty International, *Torture: Report of Amnesty International*. (London: Amnesty International Publications: 1984).
6. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979 [1975]) p. 28.
7. See J. Villareal, "Los hilos sociales del poder." In Jozani, Paz and Villareal, *Crisis de la dictadura Argentina*. (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1984).
8. Steven Gregory and Daniel Timerman argue a related although different point in their article, "Rituals of the Modern State: The Case of Torture in Argentina," *Dialectical Anthropology* 11:1 (1986) p. 67.
9. In the last fifty years, eleven presidents have been forcibly removed from office.
10. See Jacobo Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*. Trans. Toby Talbot. (New York: Vintage Books, 1981 [1980]) p. 13.
11. Timerman suggests that the military waited to take control for as long as it did for this very reason; *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46. Also there seems to be a consensus that widespread public support for the coup was based on the hope that the military would bring the return of law and order—see, for example, Robert Cox, "Never Again?," *Index on Censorship*. 15:3 (1986), pp. 7-9.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
13. The official body count of the Report of the Argentine National Commission on the Disappeared (CONADEP) 1986, *op. cit.*, was 8,960 people "disappeared" between March 1976 and 1982. Most observers believe that the actual number of deaths is significantly higher: some Argentines are believed to be unwilling to report the disappearance of their relatives for fear of reprisals, and the CONADEP figure is based on a list of specific documented cases. The most important Argentine human rights groups estimate 30,000, Amnesty International estimates 20,000 while other observers propose 12,000 as a more accurate estimate: Peter Ranis, "The Dilemmas of Democratization in Argentina," *Current History*. (January 1986), p. 30. Colm Toibin, "Reign of Terror," *The New Statesman*. 7/26 (1985) p. 26. Mark Osiel, "The Making of Human Rights Policy in Argentina: the Impact of Ideas and Interests on a Legal Conflict," *Journal of Latin American Studies*. 18 (1986) p. 145, footnote 23.
14. CONADEP 1986, *op. cit.* It is important to note that a large faction of the most famous Argentine human rights group, Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo, refuse to make this equation between disappearances and deaths. They await a full public confession from the guilty parties.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
16. The indultos were granted to military men, rebels from the uprisings, and former Monteneros (leftist Peronist guerrillas) simultaneously. Like the call for reconciliation, these acts are based on the theory of "the two demons" which portrays the dirty war as a civil war rather than military repression.
17. "Duhalde insinúa la amnistía en remplazo del indulto," *Clarín*, July 8, 1990. p. 6., my translation. The original says: "Tenemos que pensar en los derechos humanos de los vivos, y no de los muertos."
18. *Nunca Más*, meaning "never again," is the report of CONADEP 1986, *op. cit.*, sold almost 300,000 copies in Argentina, flyleaf.
19. Armando Lucini cited in Toibin 1985, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
20. Osiel 1986, *op. cit.* In addition to surveying testimony and other documents, Osiel personally interviewed a number of representatives of the various ideological camps. For a study of the trials as judicial ritual see Ester Kaufman, Un ritual jurídico: *El juicio a los ex-comandantes* (Master's thesis, FLACSO, Buenos Aires, 1987).
21. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
23. There is a certain irony here, since the President whose orders they went to such lengths to carry out was the same President they felt compelled to remove from office.
24. Emilio Eduardo Massera, "Carezco de futuro. Mi futuro es una celda," statement in the trial of the ex-commanders recorded in *El Diario del Juicio*. 1:20 (1985) October 8, 1985. In the original Spanish, the statement reads:
 "No he venido a defenderme. Nadie tiene que defenderse por haber ganado una guerra justa. Sin embargo, yo estoy aquí procesado porque ganamos esa guerra justa. Si la hubiéramos perdido no estaríamos aquí . . .
 "Pero aquí estamos. Porque ganamos la guerra de las armas y perdimos la guerra psicológica . . . Ese ensimismamiento nos impidió ver con claridad los excepcionales recursos propagandísticos del enemigo y mientras combatíamos un eficazísimo sistema de persuasión comenzó a arrojar las sombras más siniestras sobre nuestra realidad hasta transformarla, al punto de convertir en agresores a los agredidos, en victimarios a las víctimas, en verdugos a los inocentes.(. . .)
 "Cuando el enemigo se dio cuenta de que empezaba a perder la guerra de las armas montó un espectacular movimiento de amparo, inobjetable, del segrado tema de los derechos humanos. Yo tenía muy buenas razones informativas para saber que se trataba de una guerra psicológica totalmente desprovista de buenos sentimientos . . ." (my translation).
25. Osiel 1986, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-72. At the time, there had been hopes that the junta might officially declare war, so that international rules of war might be invoked, *Ibid.*, 172, note 76.
26. Note here the coincidence between this figure and the estimate of the number of "disappeared" cited by the human rights groups.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 172-3. These arguments have since been elaborated and more publicly articulated by the rebels who conducted uprisings during the Alfonsín government.
28. "La orden secreta de Videla: Directiva 504 del comando en jefe del ejército," *El Diairo del Juicio* 1:28 (1985 [1977]) p. 530. The original Spanish says: "Incrementar la acción militar de apoyo a la normalización de los ámbitos industrial, educacional, religioso y territorial o barrial, como forma de prevenir y neutralizar cualquier intento de infiltración, captación o activación de las masas que pueda interferir la marcha de Proceso de Reorganización Nacional..." (my translation).
29. Timerman 1981, *op. cit.*, p. 96.
30. Osiel 1986, *op. cit.*, p. 163, note 64.
31. CONADEP 1986, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-72.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 166-8.
33. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1951). p. 362.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 362.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 362.
36. Alicia Portnoy, *The Little School: Tales of Disappearance & Survival in Argentina*. Trans. Alicia Portnoy with Lois Athey and Sandra Braunstein. (Pittsburgh: Cleis Press, 1986).
37. Fernández in CONADEP 1986, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
38. Liwsky in CONADEP 1986, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
39. Foucault 1979, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-1.
43. Talal Asad, "Notes on Body Pain and Truth in Medieval Christian Ritual," *Economy and Society*. 12:3 (1983) pp. 287-327.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 294.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 294.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 295.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 299.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 295.
49. Often people were picked up because their names had been given by an acquaintance who had spoken any names he or she could think of, in an attempt to appease his or her torturer.
50. Indeed, Asad states: "Thus torture may be seen as a ruthless extension of the intensification of this [centralized] dominating, rationalizing power. (Such a view might fit with the claim that the widespread and unrestrained use of torture for extracting confessions is more characteristic of modern states which have greater political ambitions—totalitarian, colonial and post-colonial—than it is medieval.)" Asad 1983, *op. cit.*, pp. 299-300.
51. Steven Gregory and Daniel Timerman, "Rituals of the Modern State: The Case of Torture in Argentina," *Dialectical Anthropology*. 11:1 (1986) p. 63.
52. And, of course, through their oppression, they really do create opposition in a more literal sense, as an unintended consequence of their actions.
53. J. Timerman 1981, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
54. I use innocent in quotation marks here because the notion of innocent victims seems to imply the existence of 'guilty' ones. The question of the innocence or guilt of prisoners here seems to me entirely beside the point. It is, however, remarkably present in criticisms of the repression.
55. Gregory and Timerman 1986, *op. cit.*, point to an intriguing history of stolen bodies. For a recent study of precisely this issue, see also Rosana Guber, "Democracy Handcuffed: The Profanation of Peron's Grave" (manuscript). Regarding economic motives, theft was an integral part of most abductions, ransoms were often paid, prisoners were sometimes forced to sign over property. All in all, it was a lucrative business; CONADEP 1986, *op. cit.*, pp. 271-83.
56. Emilio Mignone, Testimony in the trial of the ex-commanders, Recorded in *El Diario del Juicio*, 1:18 (1985) p. 392, my translation. The original Spanish is: "... Usted tiene que saber que yo puedo hacer con Usted que yo quiera, porque yo aquí soy 'el señor de la vida y la muerte'." Si, le dijo y aquí entonces se paró, así como un enloquecido, empezó a señalar el piso y a los gritos decía: "Aquí abajo, en estas 'mazmorras' tengo 33 hijos de militares y se van a podrir allí."